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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the effects on both immigrants and schools of the historical encounter between New York City's public schools and East European Jewish immigrants to the city. The immigrants' background, their reasons for migrating, and the lifestyles that emerged from their efforts to adapt to American life are described. The paper examines the educational experiences and expectations that the Jews brought with them, the factors that influenced them to send their children to public schools in overwhelming numbers, and immigrant students' perceptions of how schools changed them. It is suggested that with the incorporation of numerous Jewish immigrants into the New York City public schools, the schools increasingly took on the task of social transformation to Americanize the alien poor, and in the process underwent transformation themselves by broadening their scope, becoming more practical in orientation, and reflecting a culture that encouraged public conformity but generally tolerated private diversity. Within that culture, immigrant Jews are perceived to have emerged as a diverse group, comprising some who cut all ties to the traditional community, others who sought reaffirmation of tradition, and still others who sought to synthesize the secular world of the schools and the spiritual world of their past. (Author/MJL)

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by

Stephan F. Brumberg
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February, 1982

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> Everything that frees men from their actual state, that opens their eyes to varied scenes, that expands their ideas, that enlightens them, that rouses them, leads them in the long run, to the good and the true.[1]

I. Introduction

Between the assassination of Czar Alexander II, in March of 1881, and the outbreak of World War I, in August of 1914, well over one and one-half million East European Jews emigrated to the United States, over twothirds of whom settled in New York City.[2] The Jews, who represented an insignificant proportion of the population in 1880, constituted nearly 30% of the 5.6 million New Yorkers in 1920. In that same year nearly 70% of the City's population was foreign born or children of immigrants.[3]

Mirroring the rapid growth of the City's population, New York's schools experienced volatile growth. In 1881 enrollments in the school districts which would later be merged to form the New York City school system totaled less than 250,000. In 1898, the year the City of Greater New York was formed, William Maxwell assumed the superintendency of a system with nearly one-half million pupils, and by 1914 enrollments had grown to almost

900,000 students.[4]

The ability to create a system of schools that could absorb so many students in such a short time is all the more impressive when we consider the changing composition of the student population. The most noticeable change was the displacement of native-born Americans, Germans and Irish by Russian Jews and Southern Italians.

The encounter between immigrant and school at this critical juncture helped to shape the immigrant generation and profoundly influenced the development of New York's public schools. This paper will explore how and why this encounter took place for the City's Jewish immigrants, and the effects it had upon both immigrants and schools.

II. Superintendent Maxwell and the Mission of the Public Schools

The school system which evolved under the leadership of William Maxwell, formerly head of the independent Brooklyn City schools, had as a central mission the integration of alien youth into American society. It was his "responsibility to begin the work of assimilating [alien children] into American citizenship."[5] And many believed that the safety of American institutions depended upon the school's ultimate success in this venture.

Maxwell himself strongly believed that the schools had to serve social ends in addition to traditional narrowly instructional goals. In his view, the school

> brings all social classes together in a common effort for improvement. It accustoms people of different creeds and

> different national traditions to live together on terms of peace and mutual good will. It is the melting pot which converts the children of the immigrants of all races and languages into sturdy, independent American citizens. It is the characteristic American educational institution.[7]

And the public elementary school had prospered, according to Maxwell, because over the preceding century there had been a gradual but decided "transfer of the education of our children from schools ... by the churches, to schools controlled and supported by the State...." This was coupled with "a gradual acceptance of the public school ... not merely for young children or for poor children, but for all children up to eighteen years of age. Free education is no longer thought of as a charity or a privilege, but as one of the people's rights."[8]

However, if the public schools were to accomplish the ambitious goals identified by Maxwell of enhancing equal opportunity, identifying and developing latent intellectual talents, creating a common ground for all social classes, and transforming immigrants into "independent American citizens," several conditions had to be met simultaneously: immigrants had to voluntarily send their children to school, the schools they attended had to be "public," the municipality had to provide funds for education (implying an acceptance by the citizenry that education was a legitimate public function which had high priority among competing demands for public funds), and the professional education staff had to have the competence to design and implement an educational system which was able effectively to absorb the growing and altering student population.

The primary concerns of this paper are the first two conditions--why immigrants sent their children to school, and especially, to public schools. It will confine itself to East European Jewish immigrants. This group, which sent few pupils to public schools (and represented a small fraction of the city's population) in 1881, comprised about one-third of the public school's student population by 1914.[9]

In order to determine why this group entered public schools in overwhelming numbers, and to explore the effects, if any, school and immigrant had upon one another, four basic questions will be raised:

1. What educational experiences, concepts and expectations did the East European Jews bring with them?
2. Why did they send their children to public, secular schools?
3. How did immigrant students perceive themselves changed by the schools?
4. How did the incorporation of Jewish immigrants into the public schools affect the schools themselves?

III. The New Arrivals

A. Why They Came

Following the assassination of Alexander II, in March of 1881, and the ascention to the throne of the repressive Alexander III, the impoverished Jews of the Pale of Settlement (western Russia and Russian Poland) became the victims of a series of harsh pogroms,

commencing in Elizabethgrad (April 15, 1881), spreading to the Ukrainian countryside and then to Kiev (April 26) and reaching previously "liberal" Odessa on May 3, 1881. A second wave of pogroms raged in the summer of 1881 and the year closed with bloody attacks in Warsaw.[10] The long awaited official government response was the infamous May Laws of 1882, which in effect, placed the blame for the atrocities on the victims. These "Temporary Rules," which lasted decades, prohibited Jews from settling outside the towns and townlets and from buying land in those areas. They also prevented Jews from doing business on Sundays or Christian holidays. Added to Jewish religious bans on conducting business on Saturdays and Jewish holidays, it made the task of earning a living in the severely overcrowded towns of the Pale a very difficult matter. Further, entrance to government schools, which had been a privilege granted under Alexander II, was severely proscribed, election to local councils denied, but enforced conscription rigorously implemented.[11]

The repressive climate in Russia and Russian Poland, following upon a period of relative liberality, served as a spur to many to emigrate. As Dubnow, the great historian of Russian Jewry, has noted, emigration while passive, was the only effective protest the individual could make against her powerful oppressor. And "the Jewish emigration from Russia to the United States served as a barometer of the persecutions endured by the Jews in the land of bondage."[12]

The initial trickle of emigrants, beginning in 1881, established a defined course and the exodus began to flow in mounting waves. By 1910 over 1.1 million Russian Jews had emigrated to the United States, with many others settling in Western Europe, England and Palestine. But the United States was the primary goal.[13]

While it is clear that pull factors attracted migrants to the United States (economic opportunity, religious tolerance, civil equality, freedom from a repressive military draft, educational opportunities, political liberty), these factors served to direct the massive movement of people fleeing from Eastern Europe rather than incite the outward move itself. It was the intolerable political and economic conditions coupled with fear of physical attack and mob violence which ultimately overcame the inertial force of centuries of habitation in a loved and familiar environment.[14] Once in motion, once the path was cut, the great migration swept hundreds of thousands into its currents. Only the World War could temporarily halt the flow, and only the closing of the gates to the United States with the immigration laws of 1921 and 1924 could reduce the flow to a trickle.

An early student of Jewish immigration, writing in 1914, persuasively argued that "in the Jewish movement we are dealing, not with an immigration, but with a migration. What we are witnessing to-day and for these thirty years [1880-1910] is a Jewish migration of a kind and degree almost without parallel in the history of the Jewish people."[15]

With nearly one in every three Jews of Eastern Europe ultimately migrating to the United States within the course of one generation, the Jewish migration featured movement of whole family groups, a relatively equal number of males and females, skilled artisans and laborers, formerly affluent and habitually poor.

> Within a comparatively short time, the Jewish emigrés here-- in contrast with other immigrant groups-- had the ingredients of a practically complete society. All generations, all classes and nearly every occupation typical of a normal social group were represented.[16]

The migration of a whole community, leaving aside the intriguing question as to whether it was truly representative of the community which existed in Europe at the outset of mass migration, permitted and perhaps encouraged an attempt to reestablish the Old World community in the New. While we will discuss the attempt, below, we should note that the transposed community members brought with them all of the internal conflicts, strains, arguments, philosophical/political/ideological divisions and regional customs, dialects and antagonisms, now to be worked out in a new environment. Whereas in the Pale, external forces and the anchoring weight of centuries of residence in a given place favored the traditionalists, the anti-secularists, the isolationists and the parochialists, within the American context, the external environment and absence of place-specific precedents shifted the balance in favor of the "enlightened," the secularists, the integrationists and the universalists. In effect, we become witness to the working out of the painful and

disjointing process of the emancipation of the Jews of Eastern Europe on American soil. The public schools of New York, as we shall see, came to figure prominantly in the working out of this drama.

B. The Immigrants' Conceptions of Education

What educational experiences, concepts and expectations did the East European Jewish immigrants bring with them to the United States? Traditionally they conceived of learning as a religious act and as a prerequisite to leading a full and just life. Learning was almost wholly concerned with discovering how to lead one's life in accord with the precepts and laws of God, as set forth in His Torah (the Pentateuch), as interpreted by the great rabbis of old and recorded in the collection of commentaries known as the Talmud. Secular knowledge was acquired informally, by doing, but not through formal study. If one wished to learn a skill or trade, one was apprenticed, not sent to a school.

Because of the gender-related role differences encoded in traditional Jewish religious practices, the education of females was limited or wholly neglected. Some, not all, women learned the Hebrew alphabet and a few prayers, many learned to read Yiddish (or jargon, as it was called), but rarely did a woman advance to the study of Talmud. Males, on the other hand, had to learn to read Hebrew and recite the extensive prayers of the traditional liturgy, or they would be unable to discharge their holy obligations. Many, in fact, became quite knowledgeable in the extensive religious

literature, which they were expected to study throughout their lives and from which they were to seek guidance in the very conduct of their lives.

The religious and devotional nature of tradtional learning is captured in the following excerpted dialogue between melamed (teacher) and child which was recited at the ceremony marking the beginning of the study of the Pentateuch (Hebrew Bible), which occurred at about the age of 5 or 6, after the child had mastered the mechanical reading of Hebrew:

> Melamed: Would you first like to recite something of the Torah?
>
> Child: Of Course, that is what I was created for.[17]

Traditional education did not occur in "schools" as we know them. A child was placed with a melamed who ran a "cheder" where he taught a group of children (usually all boys) in one room (usually) in his own house, and at times assisted by a helper.[18] An individual "cheder" was not part of a larger integrated educational system, and a child might be placed in several "chedarim" during the course of his elementary studies.

Finances of the family played a part in determining the placement of a child as well. Education was private; each melamed was his own entrepreneur. The fees, however, were generally meager and most melammdim were impoverished.[19] Even with low school fees, there were poor families in the community who were unable to pay. These pauper students were either educated by the community in

specially supported "Talmud Torahs" (schools for the study of Torah), or community funds were dispensed to pay the fees for such a child to attend a private "cheder." But all had to be educated--at least all males--, rich or poor, so that their religious obligations could be effectively discharged.

The best students could progress from cheder (roughly the elementary level) to yeshivah (higher level studies) to continue their religious-legal-ethical-theological-philosophical studies under the supervision of rabbis with high reputations for learning. Some yeshivot were large and relatively structured institutions of learning. Most, however, were informal study centers where learners and highly esteemed teachers came together to lead pious lives of study and contemplation. Those who ultimately came to be recognized by their peers as wise and highly competent interpreters of religious text and its attendant law, became the next generation of revered teachers.[20]

Traditional Jewish education, while still dominant at the time the great wave of emigration commenced, had come under heavy attack and no longer could claim universal support in the Jewish community. As early as the 1840's and 1850's the ideas of the Jewish Enlightenment had spread to the east from its place of birth in 18th century Germany. This movement to fuse Jewish religious beliefs with western enlightenment thinking profoundly affected a small but significant number of intellectuals. These maskilim (lovers of enlightenment), followers of the movement known as the Haskalah (the "Enlightenment") were critical of what they saw as the parochial, superstitious practices

of traditional Judaism. In the words of Eliakum Zunser, the most popular Yiddish poet and songster of the second half of the 19th century, the great mass of Jews had

> surrounded itself with a thick enclosure of fanaticism and superstition; no ray of enlightenment could enter here. The entire Jewry of Russia, Roumania, and Galicia thus lived apart; separated and isolated from the rest of the world. Nothing foreign could have entered here. This isolation served the Jews as a protection against undesirable influences from their immediate Gentile neighbors, who were then on the very lowest level of spiritual development. Our people dreaded such influences, for they could not but be injurious, both in spiritual and material respects.[21]

However, to espouse the views of the Haskalah was dangerous and could lead to one's being branded an apostate and perhaps thrown into the hands of the military recruiter. Nonetheless, some did take up the study of modern science and the history and philosophy of the west. The aim of these maskilim was

> first of all to break down the thick walls of superstition and fanaticism which for entire centuries had hemmed in the Russian Jewry from all sides. The first pioneers who undertook to weed from the Jewish garden its thorns, and to plant therein the tree of knowledge, were the Jews of the large cities. Those of the small towns still remained fixed in their old fanaticism....[22]

As Zunser appreciated, however, it was not just the ropes of tradition which bound the Jews to their old beliefs and practices, but rigid external constraints and prohibitions.

> For many long centuries /the Russian Jews/ had endured an "intellectual" fast. The government had debarred them from the world's culture. They were closely packed together in the narrow and dark ghettoes. They know of their synagogues, yeshivahs and prayer-houses..., on the one hand, and on the other hand of their little stores and inns. That there was a great world beyond and without, a world of culture, education and civilization--of this they had only heard. A great many

> of them strove to break through the "bounds" that confined them and to step into the world of light and life; but the Cossack, his lead-laden whip in hand, stood there ready to drive them back.[23]

Some did break through, and many more followed after the opening of educational opportunities to Jews in the mid-1850's under Alexander II. However, what is especially significant to us was the maskilim's acceptance of, and enthusiastic support for, secular knowledge which they argued was compatible with Jewish religious beliefs. They legitimized the formal "study" of secular content, which, by the fact of its presence in the curriculum, created the dichotomy between "religious" and "secular." Henceforth learning within the Jewish community was no longer a seamless web uniting people,Torah and lifeways; it now contained segmented portions, some of which pertained to the "secular" world and its ways of thinking, believing and acting, and other to the "religious" realm with its practices, beliefs and values. The past and its intellectual unity was perhaps ultimately and irrevocably destroyed.

The hunger for secular learning, for knowledge of the world outside of the Pale, was undoubtedly great, at least for some segments of Jewish youth. The opening up of educational opportunities by Alexander II, saw many Jews rush to partake of the hithertofore forbidden fruits and to transform themselves into "authentic" Russians. Dubnow captures the essence of this explosive escape from the physical and psychological ghetto.

> A flood of young men, lured by the rosy prospects of a free Russian people rushed /in the late 1850's and 1860's/ from the farthermost nooks and corners of the Pale into the gymnazia and universities whose doors were kept wide open for the Jews. Many children of the ghetto rapidly enlisted under the banner of the Russian youth, and became intoxicated with the luxuriant growth of Russian literature which carried to them the intellectual gifts of the contemporary European writers /including Chernyshevski, Buckle, Darwin and Spenser/ .... The heads which had but recently been bending over the Talmud folios in the stuffy atmosphere of the heders and yeshibahs were now crammed with ideas of positivism, evolution and socialism. Sharp and sudden was the transition from rabbinic scholasticism and soporific hasidic mysticism to this new world of ideas, flooded with the light of science, to these new revelations announcing the glad tidings of the freedom of thought, of the demolition of all traditional fetters, of the annihilation of all religious and national barriers, of the brotherhood of all mankind.[24]

Unlike the maskilim who sought to identify and merge the best of Jewish and secular life, the "Russified" Jews, heady with their sense of liberation, used education as a means of denouncing Judaism and effecting an escape into the larger world.

> By the word "education" they understood the destruction and extermination of all that was in any way Jewish. And when /the Jewish poet of enlightenment/ Judah Lieb Gordon sang to them, "O wake, my people, how long wilt thou sleep?" they interpreted him to mean that they should eradicate the old Judaism and destroy it.[25]

Both the maskilim and the radical assimilationists shared the desire to change and liberate the long suffering Jews of the Pale. Unlike the maskilim, however, the Russified Jews would accept no limits to the degree that Jews and Jewish lifeways were to change.

> Russification became the war cry of these Jewish circles, as it had long been the watchword of the Government. The one side was anxious to Russify, the other was equally anxious to be Russified, and the natural result was an entente cordiale between the new Jewish intelligenzia, and the Government.[26]

The Russified Jews were thus most affected when the brief era of reforms closed in the early 1880's and doors to educational and occupational opportunities were once again shut. Those who had sought complete cultural amalgamation with the Russian people were utterly unprepared for what they perceived as the treasonable behavior of the government and the Russian intelligensia.[27]

The assimilationist/secularist intellectuals were thwarted in Russia but not defeated. Many turned to the west--to Germany, Austria, England and France -- to further their search for truth and a "new" universalist identity. Others turned underground and joined those already working to create the revolutionary "new society," as nihilists, socialists or communists. And others fled the old world altogether to seek the "new society" in a new world. Though relatively small in number, they represented a significant intellectual force. They transposed the process of assimiliation and secularization to a more accepting soil. In the United States they were able to pursue their quest for total identification with the dominant culture. Although at times confronted with prejudice and discrimination, oppression was rarely if ever legally enshrined or officially sanctioned.

The formerly Russified Jews became in the United States, in the 1880's and 1890's, those most dedicated to secular public education as a means of assimilating the Jews into society at large, so that Jews could become part of one humankind and not a pariah group segregated from the larger community.

Many in this group became leading thinkers and activists in the early American labor and socialist movements. Others were ideological anarchists. Still others became quintessential capitalists.[28] They were the publicists of modern thought, popularizers of the contemporary culture, and journalists to the masses of Jews still living in relative intellectual isolation from the mainstream of turn-of-the-century thought.[29] And it was largely from their ranks that the established German-American Jews found unlikely allies in their attempts to Americanize the masses from Eastern Europe.

To better understand East European Jewish immigrants, most of whom had only elementary exposure to formal learning and generally of the more traditional type, we must note a critical process of change that many had experienced in the Pale, and from which critical lessons were learned. The industrial revolution had reached the Pale of settlement before the great wave of emigration had commenced. The joint processes of industrialization, urbanization (exacerbated by the May Laws of 1882) and secularization had begun to unfold in such centers of Jewish settlement as Lodz,[30] Bialestack, Warsaw, Vilna, Minsk and Odessa.[31] While the process of industrialization was not fully mature and had not yet pulled into its orbit the vast majority of the peoples of Eastern Europe, the modern city was a known entity and a topic of conversation. Many Jews were familiar with the modern city -- factory, sweatshop, periodic unemployment, the widening intrusion of the secular into

the lives and practices of Jews, and the "ungodliness" of the city's inhabitants. The crowded urban industrial environment was not first discovered upon arrival in New York or Boston, it had been experienced back home.

Although largely schooled in traditional chederim, the illiteracy rate for East European Jews over the age of 14, 26%, was slightly lower than the rate for all immigrants in the period 1899-1910, and substantially lower than other groups of immigrants from eastern and southern Europe.[32] The male illiteracy rate of 19.7% compared to the female rate of 36.8% (in the period 1908-1912), reflected the differential educational opportunities for Jewish boys and girls in Eastern Europe.

The presence of widespread literacy in one generation, regardless of the language in which it was achieved, tends to insure at least equivalent and usually higher rates in the succeeding generation if opportunities to become literate are available. The Jewish literacy rate serves as an indicator that they knew of and availed themselves of educational opportunities and would thus seek out schooling for their own children. They were predisposed to educate their children without being compelled by law to send their children to school.

C. Establishing a Community in the New World

As East European Jews began to arrive in New York in the early 1880's, they attempted to reestablish a coherent Jewish community.

They settled as a group on the City's Lower East Side, following in the footsteps of the earlier migration of German Jews who had lived in that quarter of the City.[33] Later they spilled across the Williamsburg Bridge to Williamsburg, Brooklyn and out the elevated train line to Brownsville[34] as the waves of migration continued to carry ever increasing numbers of Jews to New York City. But the Lower East Side maintained its position as the center of gravity, the focus of intellectual, cultural and political life of American Jewry well into the twentieth century.

The ability to reconstruct a coherent Jewish community was facilitated by the nature of Jewish emigration in this period. As we have seen, it was more in the nature of a migration of a people, constituting nearly all the elements of an organic community, and less the sum total of independent migrants in search of personal ends.

Nor were the Jewish immigrants "uprooted,"[35] to use Handlin's phrase, in the same sense as the peasant immigrant who was severed from his land. Forcibly prevented in Russia and Russian Poland from establishing firm physical roots, the Jews' rootedness was in a set of beliefs, a culture and a way of life which was potentially transportable, as the peasant's land was not. In an earlier period, the European could seek to reestablish physical roots with the land, even if foreign land. By the closing decades of the 19th century, however, the availability of free or cheap land was rapidly evaporating and the peasant found himself in a factory or mine,

or as a laborer in the city, cut off spiritually, culturally and physically from his or her past.

The Jewish immigrant, more often than not a former dweller in city or town, accustomed to making his or her way in an urban environment, sought to recreate a Jewish culture within a dominant culture, a state within a state, in order to perpetuate known life-ways, known modes of relationships with the larger world, known means of survival. The old world had taught them how to live as a minority within a majority culture, a culture that was both feared and distrusted. America was advertised as a land of liberty, a land of religious tolerance, largely free of despotic violence, but it took time to experience the realities of American life, and time to begin to dissipate generations of fear and antagonisms toward the outside world, the dominant culture.

In the Russian setting, the separatism of the Jews was as much a product of external force as of internal cohesion. The separatism, however, was never complete. The two worlds were divided by a permeable membrane which permitted functional interchanges between the two spheres, yet insured segregated cultural, social and intellectual realms. As we have seen, the number and kinds of interchanges increased between these two worlds during the 19th century, but the integrity of the membrane remained intact and still served to enclose and demarcate two distinct worlds.

The attempt to recreate the old world in the new ought not be surprising. People do not readily forego a meaningful and patterned

life and exchange it for chaos. Even if the logic of the old ways are considered out of fashion or discredited, one persists along known paths. We would expect people to hold on to what they have learned to believe in and value, especially when surrounded by an alien environment. We continue to live only as we know how.

Initially, of course, when the East European Jews started to arrive in New York there was a dearth of institutions to serve individual and communal needs, and a general lack of organizational structure to the community.[36] After the turn-of-the-century the then numerically substantial Jewish community, especially on the Lower East Side, had established a secure economic foothold and had evolved a fully elaborated set of voluntary institutions as well as a loose informal "confederational" structure. But in the early stages of settlement, in the 1880's and early 1890's, the lack of community cohesion and leadership as well as severely limited financial resources, allowed greater opportunity for individual members to be directed and influenced by forces and institutions originating outside the community. Later on this was less true as force and direction were increasingly generated from within. The last great effort of outsiders to structure the East European Jewish community, the New York Kehillah, founded in 1908 and largely directed by the well established German-Jewish community, revealed the degree to which East European Jews had built and elaborated communal institutions of their own.[37] The Communal Register of 1917-1918, a monumental effort on the part of the

Kehillah professional staff to identify and inventory all Jewish resources in New York City, ran to over 1500 pages listing and describing religious, philanthropic, cultural, social, economic, recreational and educational organizations and institutions. The estimated 1.5 million Jews of New York City were served by over 1100 synagogues, 181 congregational religious schools and over 500 chederim.[38] The immigrant community was clearly well established and richly elaborated institutionally.

Yet it was no longer the separate community it had been in Europe. It was not just a matter of greater volume or more varied forms of relations with the outside world. The basic underlying organizing principle had changed. As Glanz perceived, the basis of the Jewish community in Europe was legal. The political state legally defined its existence and delegated to it specific responsibilities (and liabilities). "The Jewish communities not only regulated internal Jewish affairs, but also fulfilled definite political functions with regard to the outer world."[39] One did not choose to be a member of the Jewish community, one was legally confined to it. In the United States the situation was completely different.

> The Jews never constituted a political entity here just as they never fulfilled specific functions as a group. The Jewish community could not expect any support from government agencies in the execution of its enactments.... Each Jew could live where he pleased, work at the occupation of his choice, and completely ignore the community if he so desired.[40]

No longer was there a Cossack beating back those venturing out beyond the traditional boundries of the community. Quite the

reverse. There were many enticements to enter the contemporary "American" world, perhaps the strongest being the need to earn a living. But there were also the schools beckoning to the young and old to partake of the tree of secular knowledge, professional preparation and vocational training. The popular culture and mass entertainments also set out their lures.

The center held, at least for a while. The Jewish community retained most of the new immigrants within its orbit. Yet the initial inhibition to venture forth for fear of the attendant consequences slowly moderated for the mass of immigrants (and rapidly dissipated for the young) as they came to realize that the American environment differed significantly from that of Russia. While many in the first generation remained comfortable with a life largely confined within the parameters of the traditional Jewish community, a number saw that there was an absence of compulsion, that one did not have to participate in traditional communal affairs, or lead one's life according to a strict adherence to traditional modes of behavior. One could, in fact, simply walk away and seek to merge one's identity with that of the dominant American culture.

In the second generation, raised outside the logic of the Old World order, there was understandably less reluctance to move out and identify with "America." In fact, one's schooling prepared and encouraged the young to do that very thing.

The voluntary nature of participation in Jewish communal life did not mean that all, or even the majority of Jews forsook their

religious or national heritage. But it established a radically different context. The working out of this new "voluntary" associational community remains the central reality of American Jewish life today, as it was at the turn-of-the-century.

D. Migration and Cultural Change

The fact of migration becomes central to an understanding of the Jewish adaptation to American life, as well as the affect they, in turn, had upon it. It also points to the central role of formal education within that interactive process. The American historian, Frederick Teggart, drawing upon the work of Hume and Turgot, identified the central importance of migrations "in promoting advance through the mingling of peoples, languages and manners."[41] Civiliaztions, according to Teggart, do not progress in a slow, continuous and inevitable manner, but by violent jolts and discontinuities.

Accepting Teggart's position and labeling it the "catastrophic theory of progress," the Chicago sociologist Robert Park viewed civilization not as a product of isolation and inbreeding, but as a consequence of contact and communication. The forces which have been decisive in "the history of mankind are those which have brought men together in fruitful competition, conflict and co-operation."[42] And chief among these forces encouraging contact was the migration of people.

For east European Jewry, the winds of change had brought new influences into the thoughts and lifeways of the community, but

given the separatist nature of its status as a culture within a culture, enforced by legal edict from without and protective inertia from within, significant change was confined to those who, as individuals, successfully fled the community. The Russified Jews of the 1860's and 1870's serve as the most conspicuous examples.

But if change is to occur to individuals who remain identified as members of the group, if the normal ways of the group are to change, such change

> ensues only upon the occurrence, at some given time and in some given place, or an intrusion of such a character as to break down the established order.[43]

Teggart concludes that in most instances

> significant changes in culture have been due to the influence of migrations of peoples, with the accompanying collision of different types of civilization.[44]

The migration of East European Jews in large numbers to the United States would seem to satisfy the preconditions for cultural change.

While Teggart's argument implies that the direction of influence and change is from "invading" culture to "invaded," we would anticipate that the influences would be reciprocal. The two cultures did, in fact, mutually influence and change each other, but it was the Jewish culture which was initially most "intruded" upon. Park saw this and extended Teggart's argument to encompass changes to the individual migrants.[45]

As a result of the interpenetration of one culture by another, "the traditional organization of society breaks down," customs lose

their hold and the individual is emancipated.[46]

Teggart also understood that the breakdown in traditional organization, accepted behavior and modes of thought could serve to release and intellectually liberate the individual.

> The study of the psychological effects of collision and contact between different groups reveals the fact that the most important aspect of 'release' lies, not in freeing the soldier, warrior or berserker from the restraint of conventional modes of action, but in freeing the individual judgment from the inhibitions of conventional modes of thought.[47]

This behavioral, intellectual and ethical "release," this new found liberty, suggests a lack of form and direction that would be hard for the individual to bear. The chaotic world that the migrant had to face, a world without fixed references, has been captured by the Nobel Laureate, Czeslaw Milosz, himself a migrant to the United States.

> Form is achieved in stable societies. My own case is enough to verify how much of an effort it takes to absorb contradictory traditions, norms, and an overabundance of impressions, and to put them into some kind of order. The things that surround us in childhood need no justification, they are self-evident. If, however, they whirl about like particles in a kaleidoscope, ceaselessly changing position, it takes no small amount of energy simply to plant one's feet on solid ground without falling.[48]

A completely liberated individual cannot long reside in a world without definite shape and predictability and so one is forced to seek a new configuration of reality, and a new set of values and beliefs to support this view of reality. In the process of "reintegration" into a "new social order," according to Park, the individual emerges as both emancipated and enlightened.

> The emancipated individual invariably becomes in a certain sense and to a certain degree a cosmopolitan. He learns to look upon the world in which he was born and bred with something of the detachment of a stranger. He acquires, in short, an intellectual bias. Simmel has described the position of the stranger in the community, and his personality, in terms of movement and migration.... The effect of mobility and migration is to secularize relations which were formerly sacred. One may describe the process, in its dual aspect, perhaps, as the secularization of society and the individuation of the person.[49]

The aggressive, self-assertive immigrant, freed from conventional modes of thought, can be, and often is viewed as a threat to the dominant culture. Their critical judgments, different life styles, foreign ideologies, moral and cultural relativism, must be challenged, contained and constrained. But what could established society do to counter the unsettling effect of the migrant? Liberal-democratic ideologies and legal-constitutional constraints prevented overt containment or outright prohibition, although local pressures and prejudices often served the same ends.[50] In New York City and in the towns and cities throughout the northeast and mid-west which became home to large numbers of immigrants, public education was perhaps the prime agent of control and containment, the means of directing and shaping the energies released by the breakdown of the immigrants' old order, and of eradicating the alien ideas and lifeways they brought with them. Through formal education the dominant culture could seek to transform and absorb the immigrant generation and especially their offspring, and thereby reestablish social and cultural equilibrium. The race was on to see if "we" could make "them" more like "us" before "they" irrevocably altered the society we called "ours."

The fate of the individual immigrant, however, could not be resolved so simply. The immigrant could not be made into a wholly new man or woman, cut to the cloth of his or her new country. Park perceived the dilemma of the immigrant and, applying the "catastrophic theory of civilization" to the historic case of the Jewish migrants, saw that razing the walls of the ghetto would not lead automatically to full identification and assimilation with the cultural life of the people who resided outside the walls. When the Jews were permitted to participate in the cultural and social life of the peoples amongst whom they lived,

> there appeared a new type of personality, namely a cultural hybrid, a man living and sharing intimately in the cultural life and traditions of two distinct peoples; never quite willing to break, even if he were permitted to do so, with his past and his traditions, and not quite accepted, because of racial prejudice, in the new society in which he now sought to find a place. He was a man on the margin of two cultures and two societies, which never completely interpenetrated and fused. The emancipated Jew was, and is, historically and typically the marginal man, the first cosmopolite and citizen of the world.[51]

To understand the men and women perched between two worlds, Park points us to a source which we shall turn to shortly in our attempt to comprehend the interaction of Jewish immigrants and the schools.

> The autobiographies of Jewish immigrants, of which a great number have been published in America in recent years, are all different versions of the same story--the story of the marginal man; the man who, emerging from the ghetto in which he lived in Europe, is seeking to find a place in the freer, more complex and cosmopolitan life ofan American city. One may learn from these autobiographies how the process of assimilation actually takes place in the individual immigrant.[52]

Many immigrants, after an initial period of grace during which

they permitted themselves to be enveloped in the deceptively familiar folkways of the ghetto, were forced to recognize that their world had been radically altered and they had to attempt to construct a new world view. The younger the immigrant, the greater the probability that they would be forced to search for a new synthetic reality. And for the children of immigrants, their world would be fashioned out of the materials at hand, the given resources of the new world.

Education, in its broadest sense, became a prime need for virtually all immigrants. Whether it be "formal" instruction in school, or informal learning at work or in the streets, the need to adapt to a new world, a new existential reality, made learning critical for survival and later for advancement. Thus conditions existed which were highly favorable to those who sought to recruit the Jewish immigrants into formal institutions of learning. Young and old both wanted and needed to learn.

IV. Going to School

Traditional habits of schooling and a high level of literacy combined with the vast felt need to know about their new world and how to live successfully within it, helps to explain the oft noted enthusiasm of East European Jewish immigrants and their childrn for education.[53] And the acceptance of "secular" learning, a process that began for some in Europe, continued to grow. Secular knowledge could be viewed instrumentally by the mass of immigrants as a set

of tools needed to live and prosper in a new environment. Such knowledge, along with the learning of vocational and technical skills, was acquired in order to achieve limited, usually economic, ends. It is doubtful that most immigrants were aware initially of the degree to which such new knowledge and skills would disrupt their lives and transform their relationships to one another and to their God. Later, they understood.

But the desire for education might not have led to the public "secular" school. It might have resulted in a system of Jewish parochial schools, melding secular learning with Jewish religious instruction, under the sponsorship and control of the Jewish community itself. In fact, the then emerging Roman Catholic school system represented a viable and dynamic model.[54] With few exceptions, however,[55] Jewish day schools were not established in this period and the overwhelming proportion of immigrant children were enrolled in the public schools.[56] Why?

The formation of Jewish day schools in the 1880's and 1890's were inhibited for several reasons, the two must significant of which were 1) lack of sufficient community organization and structure, as discussed above, and 2) severely limited finances. At this period the Jews of the Lower East Side had yet to develop a common sense of identity. Rather, individuals still saw themselves as Litvaks (Jews from Lithuania), Galitziana (from Galicia, Austrian Poland), Rumanian or Russian; and within these categories, strongest allegiance was to one's home province and town or hamlet. Each group often

organized into "landsmanschaft," which provided critical services to its members-- a quorum to pray, financial assistance in times of dire need, help in finding a job, and a burial plot. These small, impoverished groups simply lacked the resources, individually or corporately, to finance the expenses of a school. Later, when allegiances broadened and the economic position of the community as a whole had improved, schools were successfully founded. But by that time, after the turn of the century, the pattern of public school attendance was well established and difficult to counteract on a large scale.[57]

The wealth of New York's Jewish community was to be found in the older, established German-Jewish community.[58] It is conceivable that they could have organized and financed a system of Jewish parochial schools. But as we shall see, this was not in their own interests and diametrically counter to their efforts and wishes with regard to the East European immigrants.

Perhaps more important than the initial inability of the immigrants to found their own schools, a powerful array of forces, both attracted and directed them to the public school. And it was in the public school where the established élites sought to reintegrate the displaced migrants, and especially their children, into the logic and legitimacy of a "new social order," the substance and form of which was initially determined by these élites.[59]

People will tend to follow existing paths before they set out to create new ones for themselves. This is especially true when

one wishes to cross unknown and poorly charted terrain. The East European Jewish immigrants in the 1880's and 1890's came without a tradition of secular-religious day schools. And, except in the case of pauper education, the community did not formally sponsor or finance the education of the young. Education, especially religious-moral education, was a responsibility of each parent, perhaps their central responsibility, which was reiterated daily by every observant Jew. In the central prayer of the liturgy one is exhorted to love God and follow his commandments;

> And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children,
> and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house,
> and when thou walkest by the way....

We would not expect that upon arrival in New York City the immigrants would suddenly create a new education, new in form and substance, and also quickly arrive at a consensus that education was a communal responsiblity. Rather, each ideological segment would be expected to seek to replicate its practices brought from the old world. The orthodox sought to create chederim,[60] the radical secularist-integrationists sought out government schools, and the maskilim groped for some viable amalgam of both worlds.

All groups, however, were profoundly influenced by American educational traditions and school-related law. Critical to the understanding of school tradition were the educational paths already established by the Jewish community residing in New York City by 1880, composed largely of Jews who had emigrated from Germany earlier in the century, but also including a small number of East European Jews.[61]

The German-Jews were already well integrated into American society. They counted among their number several wealthy and influencial individuals, among whom were Jacob Schiff, the Seligman family, Louis Marshall, the Strausses and the Warburgs. As a group they tended to be "liberal" in their religious practice, very much products of the German-Jewish enlightenment and subsequent religious reforms.

As a community they looked upon the arrival of an ever increasing number of their co-religionists from the east, a people with whom they had little sense of kinship and little or no direct contact or knowledge, with a mixture of pity, horror and dismay, but ultimately with compassion. Whether they recognized an underlying bond, these two quite distinct communities were thrown together in the popular imagination. Perhaps out of a selfish interest to try and rescue their formerly held status positions in the larger community by improving the conditions of their co-religionists, or an acceptance of responsibility by German-Jewish leaders acting out of a sense of noblesse oblige or Jewish "Tzadakah" (charity), or through the influence of progressive reform movements of the era, the established community energetically sought to aid the new immigrants. Most often the goal of such assistance was to rapidly modernize, Americanize and integrate the immigrants and their children into American life. And the means identified for achieving this end was most often the American public school.

The efforts to extend relief and to begin the process of trans-

formation of the immigrants were spearheaded by the women of the established community. Their efforts and attitudes are captured at a critical moment in time at the "First Jewish Women's Congress," held in Chicago in 1893.[62] The well educated and highly motivated women who gathered on that occasion expressed their contradictory feelings toward the immigrants--distaste for what they were, but compassion for their suffering and a desire to help. The social-work spirit kindled by and reflected in the settlement house movement[63] here merged with traditional Jewish charitable sentiments and practices.

> And who are there to lend a helping, nay, a saving hand here? The women of America! The religiously enlightened matrons of our country, delivered from the oppressor's yoke, must dive into the depths of vice to spread culture and enlightenment among our semi-barbaric Russian immigrants, not insusceptible to the keen edge of the civilizers' art. With this prolegomena, let us go into medias res:[64]

And plunge in they did. With soap and water and a keen sense of self-assurance, they threw their fears and reservations to the wind and went to the people, ironically drawing upon radical Russian thought for inspiration.

> Tchernystchewsky, in his book, "What's to be done?" deals with the very people, the problems of whose salvation we are trying to solve; from his statements and by our own experience, we learn that it is only through association, by actual contact, that we may hope for their regeneration. The dread of disease and contagion should not separate us from our unfortunate brothers and sisters.... We cannot expect to enjoy immunity from disease, even if we keep away from the poor.[65]

And what was done?

> Our first step in character building, after we have won the confidence of the child, is to impress upon its mind the necessity of cleanliness.... Self-respect and industry and order were then developed by teaching the child to keep its clothing in repair.... This intimate association with the children revealed to us the deficiency of their moral and religious training, and a Sabbath School was the outgrowth.
>
> Good manners are cultivated, and opportunities are given the children at religious festivals, concerts and entertainments. to meet and mingle with those more favored children who know the charms of a refined home.[66]

The concern with manners and cleanliness, however, reflected the outward manifestation of a much more deep-seated change that these reformers wished to effect -- the conversion of the inner person from "alien" to "American," from "them" to "us."

> Their foreign language and customs are their most flagrant offenses here, and as long as they are permitted to transplant their section of Poland, Russia, or Roumania to a certain area on this soil, it is still the old country, though ostensibly America. Environment is the first educator; and until the legions of the Tenth Ward /the Lower East Side/ can be decimated by distribution throughout the city or elsewhere, where their characteristics can become modified by other environment, much of educational effort amongst them will be unresponsive.[67]

How were these deeper transformations to be effected? On the one hand, educational programs were needed to arm the immigrants with the requisite knowledge and skills, and, on the other hand, environmental changes to encourage assimilation and widen the range of social contacts and provide for more healthful and morally "clean" surroundings. Programs were mounted to "redistribute" Jewish immigrants throughout the city and nation.[68] Such efforts at redistribution, even if they resulted in new segregated neighborhoods, achieved their goals only with the passage of time and the

improved economic conditions of the community, and perhaps facilitated by organized efforts (especially labor union sponsored housing and social reformer-induced housing legislation). Our focus, however, will be confined to edcuational efforts at transformation.

Educational efforts often commenced with home "uplift" visits by ladies' groups that later evolved into more structured, institutionalized programs. Mrs. Millie Louis, a leading figure in the New York Jewish community, active in efforts to assist the immigrants, and founder of the Louis Downtown Sabbath Schools, expressed the link between ad hoc and later established efforts in the address she gave before the Jewish Women's Congress of 1893.

> Encouragement to brace up against misfortune, a loan of money to provide food, the effort to obtain employment for the workers in the family, the supply of a few cleaning implements, with assistance to most pleasingly distribute the sparse furniture, and above all, cheery words of sympathy, and repeated visits,--these make up part of the routine practiced by our "Sisterhoods of Personal Service," the "Volunteer Corps of Friendly Visitors to the Tenth Ward," and the "Louis Down Town Sabbath and Daily School." The newest organization to undertake this work adds to the above routine daily house-to-house visiting and nursing of the sick discovered in their rounds. It is known as "Visiting Trained Nurses...."[69]

These visiting nurses, under the direction of Lillian D. Wald and Mary M. Brewster, became, in time, the famed Henry Street Settlement House.[70]

Another speaker at the Congress, Julia Richman, later district superintendent of schools on the Lower East Side, expressed her particular concern for the working girl, who, if unaided, might be

"sucked down into the stratum of physical misery or moral oblivion, from which depths it becomes almost impossible to raise her."[71] Clubs and training classes run by settlement houses did not reach these girls, nor were they served by the public schools. What was needed, according to Richman, were vocational training schools for women, job placement services for them, and child care facilities for working mothers and mothers receiving training. Later, in her capacity as superintendent, she would be able to put a number of her schemes into practice.

One of the first institutionalized attempts to reach and refashion the impoverished immigrant population was the Hebrew Free School Society. Founded in 1864 by "uptown" Jews who were scandalized by the success of Christian missionary schools on the Lower East Side that had been established to fill the gap in "moral instruction" of poor Jewish youth. By 1873 the President of the Society could claim;

> We have in great measure, although not entirely, rescued those poor children from the machinations of the mission schools, and have been the means to convince many congregations in the city that Hebrew schools are a necessity and can be successfully established and carried on.[72]

The Hebrew Free Schools, however, constantly struggled due to a lack of moral and financial support from the established Jewish community. Early on they abandoned the one day school they had founded (in 1864) and concentrated their efforts on relatively inexpensive after school programs. According to one student of the period, the day school "was abolished principally because it

was no longer in consonance with the view, which had gained the ascendency among the German Jews, that secular education should be given only under non-denominational auspices."[73]

Increasingly the established and religiously "reformed" Jews frowned upon institutions which perpetuated distinctly "East European" traits and practices.

> The German Jews considered the Talmud Torah /orthodox, Yiddish speaking and following East European religious practices/ to be the antithesis of everything they were striving to achieve. To them the foreign speech and what they considered uncouth manners and the fanatical religious customs of the Russian Jews were things better discarded as quickly as possible, certainly not cultivated.[74]

Thus the German Jews pressured the Hebrew Free Schools to stress Americanization at the expense of Judaic instruction; vocational training and manners rather than prayer and Talmud.

One important means adopted in the attempt to Americanize the immigrant children was to make attendance at a public school a precondition for acceptance into the free Hebrew schools.[75] Religious training was clearly to take a secondary place to that of the public day school.

By the 1890's the established community began to lose interest in sponsoring religious instruction in any form. Their support shifted to a new institution on the Lower East Side, the Educational Alliance, the expressed purpose of which was to Americanize the children of the ghetto. It "was conceived as an all-embracing instrumentality to uplift and Americanize the immigrants, and by its sweeping and thorough program 'to dissolve the ghetto.'"[76]

By 1899 the Hebrew Free Schools, with enrollments of over 5,000, were forced to close due to lack of funds, although their program was ostensibly merged with that of the Educational Alliance.

The Alliance's program of English language instruction, vocational training, lectures, art lessons, and library (the famed Aguilar Library was housed in its new quarters on East Broadway when it opened in 1892) were viewed as complementary to the efforts of the public schools. In fact one of the Alliance's Officers was Julia Richman, district superintendent of schools.[77]

The Baron de Hirsch Fund, established in 1890 through a major bequest from the eminent French-Jewish philanthropist, Baron Maurice de Hirsch, sought to assist the long suffering and impoverished masses of Russian and Rumanian Jewish immigrants to adapt to their new American environment. The Fund's Board of Trustees, composed of the leading members of the established uptown German-Jewish community,[78] were in basic agreement with the Baron that assimilation, facilitated by a distribution of the immigrant population throughout the country, and training in agricultural, manual and technical occupations, would best meet their goals.

> The Americanization of the Jewish immigrant was the principal aim. The Trustees of the Fund attacked the problems of the adjustment and assimilation of the immigrant Jewish population from many angles, relief, temporary aid, the promotion of suburban industrial enterprises, removal from urban centers, land settlement, agricultural training, trade and general education and the aid and protection of the immigrants through port work and legislative and legal channels.[79]

In reviewing the "objectives and purposes" of the Fund, one

cannot help but be struck with the similarities of its goals and those of the Russified Jews in Russia in the 1860's and 1870's. Both sought the integration of their unenlightened brethren into the dominant culture, secular education, learning the dominant language, encouragement to engage in primary productive labor (rather than "parasitic" middleman, tertiary sector activities, ironic given the occupational backgrounds of the Fund's Trustees), especially farming, and a disinterest if not outright aversion to things "Jewish."[80]

Of particular interest to public education was the Fund's sponsorship of the "Baron de Hirsch" English classes, classes in English language to prepare young immigrants for entrance into the public schools.[81] Begun in 1890 in rented quarters and moved to the new Educational Alliance Building in 1892, it placed over 5,500 children directly in to the public schools by 1900, while an additional 8,000 children and adults who had taken the classes had registered in the public schools on their own.

When these classes were initiated the public schools would not accept non-English speaking students, or would place the few accepted in the lowest grade, regardless of age. The Baron de Hirsch classes became the first formally organized English-as-a-second-language program, a program which its organizers were able to see transferred to the public schools after the turn of the century.[82]

The Baron de Hirsch classes had no wish to compete with the

public schools. On the contrary, they viewed themselves as a complementary effort aimed at channeling all Jewish children to them, and with sufficient preparation to benefit from the educational program that the schools offered. When the public schools assumed responsibility for English language training, therefore, the Baron de Hirsch classes were phased out.[83] And when the Board of Education initiated day classes for adults, the head of the mothers' classes at the Alliance, Sarah Elkas, closed down her program and moved to the Board herself.[84]

Commitment to the public schools on the part of the Jewish establishment, supported by the "assimilationist" elements among the Russian-Jewish population, was a basic element in the program to settle, assimilate, and ameliorate the conditions of the downtown masses. We see how fervently this position was held, as early as 1880, in the report of the President of the Hebrew Free Schools.

> No pupil is admitted to any of our schools except a regular attendant in one of the public schools.... To open day schools, as proposed by some, is entirely out of the question. We have no right to open sectarian schools. We cannot...and must not deprive our children of the benefits of our public schools, ... They should and must mingle with children of all nationalities, creeds, and social grades, to grow up to mutual respect, thereby helping us and themselves to break down all barriers of race and creed.[85]

In 1889, Jacob Schiff himself proposed "the appointment of truancy agents to follow up the absence of Jewish children from the public schools."[86] And if children were turned away due to a lack of school space, then he recommended applying pressure to the Board of Education to increase the number of places.

The settlement houses, youth clubs and community workers also informed, guided and encouraged the youth of the Lower East Side to enter public schools-- as a means to prepare for one's American future.

The acceptance of the public school by the German-Jewish community established strong precedence for the newer immigrants. Prior to the 1850's, Jewish children, as Protestant and Catholic, attended schools sponsored by their own denominations.[87] Even the "free" schools of the Public Education Society had a decidedly "Christian" character and the newly established Board of Education had supported the concept of public schools as nonsectarian but Christian institutions as late as 1843.[88]

In the early 1850's, however, legislation was passed by the New York State legislature, supporting the movement to secularization of the public schools.[89] As a result in the 1850's New York's "Jewish children flocked to /the public schools/, and the all-day Jewish schools where a tuition fee was charged collapsed."[90]

Perhaps not without influence on parents and children, "only pupils from the public schools would be admitted to the ranks of /the/ students" of the Free Academy (the College of the City of New York).[91] For a community seeking entry into the middle classes, or wishing to secure and improve the positions of their children through appropriate vocational preparation, a clearly defined road to higher education, and associated higher status, had to exert enormous attraction. That public schools were free, and now largely

divested of overt proselytizing, were additional inducements to parents to place their children in the public schools.[92]

When immigrants from the East started to arrive in large numbers after 1881, it was assumed by the established Jewish community that they would naturally enroll their children in public schools. The concept of a Jewish religious school was now as foreign to the established American Jews as the culture and lifeways of the immigrants themselves. And the "foreigners" were to be Americanized, not encouraged to retain their old world ways.

In addition to personal encouragement, moral exhortation and institutional facilitation, compulsory attendance laws also channeled immigrant children into the schools, especially public schools. Fear and repulsion toward the immigrant --his poverty and foreign ways-- and lack of confidence in the immigrant parents' ability to raise proper Americans, had considerable influence in moving legislatures to enact compulsory attendance laws. "Often combining fear of social unrest with humanitarian zeal, reformers used the powers of the state to intervene in families and to create alternative institutions of socialization."[93] In 1891 a select committee of the prestigious National Council of Education of the N.E.A. clearly defined the problem that schools were to combat:

> foreign influence has begun a system of colonization with a purpose of preserving foreign languages and traditions and proportionately of destroying distinctive Americanism. It has made alliance with religion....[94]

It boiled down to a battle between "them" and "us," and who was

going to change whom first. The élite of the dominant culture, represented by the men on the select committee, would be sure to use their control of social and political institutions to try and see that their side won. And compulsory education was one powerful weapon at their disposal.

Not only the motives behind the laws, but the legislation itself affected the flow of students to public rather than Jewish sponsored schools. In New York State's compulsory attendance law of 1874, it was required that

> all parents and those who have the care of children shall instruct them, or cause them to be instructed in spelling, reading, writing, English grammar, geography, and arithmetic.[95]

The required curriculum, secular subjects in English, meant that traditional cheder or yeshiva education (religious subjects in Hebrew taught through the language of Yiddish) did not meet state law. Secular subjects also required English speaking teachers, and in the Lower East Side of that day, many who held appropriate qualifications were ideologically incompatible with the teachers of religious subjects. The financial and staffing implications of the compulsory attendance law may have presented insurmountable obstacles to the founding of traditional Jewish day schools. It is signficant, in this regard, that the major attempt to establish a traditional school, the Machzike Talmud Torah, in 1883, was structured as an after-school program from 3:30 to 7:00 p.m.[96]

The melamed who wished to open a private cheder could not organize it as an all-day school. He generally lacked qualifications

in secular subjects and most often had an inadequate command of English.[97] Thus the melamed was forced to sell his services at a time complementary to "compulsory" secular schooling. He was forced to work under serious handicaps and was perhaps doomed to failure. He had to compete within a context over which he had little control, within which he was unable to initiate action, and within which the legitimizing and supporting forces of tradition and community he had known and depended upon in the old world were now largely absent. A keen outside observer of the ghetto, Huchins Hapgood, captured the painful predicament of the student and the tragic fate of the melamed.

> In America, the "chaider" assumes a position entirely subordinate. Compelled by law to go the American public school, the boy can attend "chaider" only before the public school opens in the morning or after it closes in the afternoon. At such times the Hebrew teacher, who dresses in a long black coat, outlandish tall hat, and commonly speaks no English, visits the boy at home, or the boy goes to a neighboring "chaider."
>
> Contempt for the "chaider's" teaching comes the more easily because the boy rarely understands his Hebrew lessons to the full. His real language is English, the teacher's is commonly the Yiddish jargon, and the language to be learned is Hebrew.[98]

Finally, the relative "equality" of educational opportunities for girls in the public schools was undoubtedly a strong attraction to the newly "liberated" immigrant woman. As Henrietta Szold perceived

> the Russian Jew arrived in the United States /with negative ideas concerning the education of Women/. Before he knew it his girls had slipped into the public schools, and were being taught pretty much all his boys were learning. To his own amazement he found himself not half so rabid as before in opposing the "custom of the Gentiles." Circumstances, or,

in modern parlance, economic and industrial conditions, had not a little to do with his stoicism.[99]

Predisposed to schooling upon arrival, encouraged and assisted to enroll in public school by the established Jewish community and the service institutions it had created, unable initially to organize and finance schools of their own, compelled by law to send their children, boys and girls, to school where they could be best transformed into good, law-abiding Americans who could speak and comport themselves in the "proper" American manner, and last, but not least, the children's desire to be like other children, to be knowledgeable and participating members of their native American culture, it is no wonder that immigrant children flocked to New York's public schools. The ghetto schools were usually overcrowded but ultimately they were able to accept all who presented themselves as well as those the truant office brought in. "The great majority of children who attend school are sent without any thought of law," said a Connecticut school man in 1889, although he could just as well have been speaking of the Jewish ghetto. "They would go just as regularly if no such law had ever been enacted. If this were not so these laws could not be enforced in any case."[100]

The success of the effort to direct immigrant Jewish children to secular, public schools and away from more traditional forms of Jewish education is dramatically revealed in the following statistics: in 1914 nearly all of the 275,000 elementary aged (6-14) Jewish children in New York City were attending public schools and

many more were in public high schools and colleges, while less than 25% of these children received any form of Jewish religious instruction in that same year.[101] The fate of the Jewish community of New York and that of the public schools were now indelibly linked.

V. Changes in the Schools

The presence of hundreds of thousands of Jewish immigrant children along with at least as many children from other ethnic groups had to affect the institution of the school. It was forced to rethink its mission, its breadth of activities and its curriculum. Programs originated in the private sector found their way into the public schools from health care and nutrition to play opportunities, kindergarten classes and the extended school day.[102] In her excellent study of the evolution of the New York City school in response to its immigrant charges, Selma Berrol persuasively argues that "every new subject added, every old one dropped, was related in some way to the needs of the alien poor."[103] Especially with regard to English language instruction, Berrol describes how slowly, with pressure and example provided from outside the system, the school system adjusted and elaborated its programs to meet the varied needs of its non-English speaking students.[104]

Changes occurred in schooling and schools as the system grew and as its student population became increasingly one of non-English speaking "aliens." Many of the models for change originated, not

surprisingly in the private philanthropic and social service sector which had "gone to the people" to ameliorate their conditions and transform the ghetto dwellers into respected and respectable Americans. When educators were confronted with new problems unresolved by old ways, they looked to the private agencies as potential sources of workable programs. In addition, political pressures were brought to bear on the schools by social workers and their influential backers to assume responsibility for many of these private sector programs. It led, ultimately to a radical expansion of the function of public education.

VI. Effects of Schools on Their Immigrant Students

Having traced the path of immigrants from Eastern Europe to the American public school, how did going to America and going to school affect the individual emigrant? Here we can allow the immigrant to speak for him or her self. Though a sample biased perhaps in the direction of those who received considerable formal education, their experiences still reflect those of many of their compatriots. They also represent Park's "marginal individual," the person who has shared intimately in the lifeways of two distinct cultures.

Most author-immigrants recorded the role of the schools, in concert with the streets, in hastening the breakdown of traditional customs and beliefs. For the child of the ghetto, English rapidly displaced Yiddish.

> Yiddish, the lingo of greenhorns, was held in contempt by the Ludlow streeters, who felt mightily their Americanism.[105]

And as Hapgood saw,

> he runs away from the supper table to join his gang on the Bowery, where he is quick to pick up the very latest slang; where his talent for caricature is developed often at the expense of his parents, his race, and all "foreigners," for he is an American, he is "the people," and like his glorious countrymen in general, he is quick to ridicule the stranger.[106]

Old beliefs and practices lost their traditional hold on many youths who became infected and influenced by secular learning. In the words of Morris Rafael Cohen, who immigrated from Russian Poland and who later became a renowned teacher and philosopher at City College,

> The world that we faced on the East Side at the turn of the century presented a series of heartbreaking dilemmas. To the extent that we made the world of science and enlightenment a part of ourselves, we were inevitably torn from the traditions of narrow Orthodoxy. For some two thousand years our people had clung to their faith under the pressure of continual persecution. But now, for us at least, the walls of the ghetto had been removed. We learned that all non-Jews were not mere soulless heathens. We found that the Jews had not been the only conservators of wisdom and civilization. And having been immersed in the literature of science we called upon the old religion to justify itself on the basis of modern science and culture.[107]

At the same time as the formal content of learning led many to question their beliefs, the life of the school, most often represented by the classroom teacher--as person rather than pedagogue--presented American lifeways to the immigrant children. And school was often the only window on the world outside of the ghetto that was available to the child.

> We children of that day had not even the cinema theatre, to which our parents could go, and see, together with their children, a picture of the big world outside the ghetto, and so learn of American customs, attitudes, manners, and standards, no matter how distorted. We never saw the interior of an American home, even as pictured on the cinema screen. Our parents read no American literature, they had no understanding of America.... To my father and mother all the universe was bound by their religious affiliations and by memories of the old land left behind.[108]

Without an opportunity to enter the school, the ghetto youth was placed in a job and denied access to America.

> A child that came to this country and began to go to school had taken the first step into the New World. But the child that was put into the shop remained in the old environment with the old people, held back by the old traditions, held back by illiteracy.[109]

Learning to be American was not always presented as affirmation. At times the taint of social unacceptability, the unconscious, and therefore all the more hurtful, rebuke, acted and reacted upon the sensitive youth. The noted American critic and essayist, Alfred Kazin, the son of immigrants, was alive to these emotionally charged wavelenths transmitted by his schooling.

> I was the first American child, their offering to the strange new God; I was to be the monument of their liberation from the shame of being--what they were. And that there was shame in this was a fact that everyone seemed to believe as a matter of course. It was the gleeful discounting of themselves--what do we know?--with which our parents greeted every fresh victory in our savage competition for "high averages," for prizes, for a few condescending words of official praise from the principal at assembly. It was in the sickening invocation of "Americanism" --the word itself accusing us of everything we apparently were not. Our families and teachers seemed tacitly agreed that we were somehow to be a little ashamed of what we were.... a "refined," "correct," "nice" English was required of us at school that we did not naturally speak, and that our teachers could never be quite sure we would keep. This English was

peculiarly the ladder of advancement.[110]

At times the immigrant rebeled against the notion that he arrived in this country without any trace of "civilization."

> The alien who comes here from Europe is not the raw material that Americans suppose him to be. He is not a blank sheet to be written on as you see fit. He has not sprung out of nowhere. Quite the contrary. He brings with him a deep-rooted tradition, a system of culture and tastes and habits-a point of view which is as ancient as his national experience and which has been engendered in him by his race and his environment. And it is this thing--this entire Old World soul of his--that comes in conflict with America as soon as he has landed.[111]

The consciousness and growing knowledge of two cultures on the part of many immigrants, as Park suggested, led to a consciousness of marginality, of belonging simultaneously to two, at times warring, cultures. In the words of Mary Antin, Polish-Jewish immigrant, popular writer and strong supporter of assimilation, one cannot readily nor completely shed the past. Though she wants to forget the agonizing process of migration and assimilation,

> I can never forget, for I bear the scars. But I want to forget--sometimes I long to forget.... It is painful to be consciously of two worlds. The Wandering Jew in me seeks forgetfulness. I am not afraid to live on and on, if only I do not have to remember too much.[112]

Some were able to achieve a personal synthesis.

> Now that I had had a glimpse of the New World /through attendance at public school/, a revolution took place in my whole being. I was filled with a desire to get away from the whole old order of things. And I went groping about blindly, stumbling, suffering and making others suffer. And then through the experience, intelligence and understanding of other beings a little light came to me and I was able to see that the Old World was not all dull and the new not all glittering. And then I was able to stand between the two,

with a hand in each.[113]

But perhaps the most poignant words are those of the immigrant writer, Anzia Yezierska. In the title story to her collection of stories, Children of Loneliness, a college educated daughter, the story's protagonist, is made to address her "old world" parents:

> I can't live with the old world, and I'm yet too green for the new. I don't belong to those who gave me birth or to those with whom I was educated.[114]

And her only consolation is to recognize the common fate she shared with millions of immigrants:

> I have broken away from the old world; I'm through with it. It's behind me. I must face this loneliness till I get to the new world....
> But am I really alone in my seeking? I'm one of the millions of immigrant children, children of loneliness, wandering between worlds that are at once too old and too new to live in.[115]

Some immigrant writers perceived that severance from one's traditional culture before being securely tied to one's new world would lead to moral drift.

> Cut adrift suddenly from their ancient moorings, they were floundering in a sort of moral void. Good manners and good conduct, reverence and religion, had all gone by the board, and the reason was that these things were not American. A grossness of behavior, a loudness of speech, a certain repellent "American" smartness in intercourse, were thought necessary, if one did not want to be taken for a greenhorn or a boor.[116]

The moral relativism and opportunism of those not clearly integrated into the logic of the world they inhabited is expressed by Ornitz:

> The order of the day was--PLAY THE GAME AS YOU SEE IT PLAYED. ... It was a sordid generation, a generation creeping out of the mud into the murk. Avrum was right about one thing. There was not as yet an American identify. There was yet to

> rise up an American standard.... It was the time and process of finding ourselves, a sort of evolutionary process that began as a creeping thing in the scum.[117]

The loss of anchorage did have a positive side for some. While shut off from the past, it made some individuals more open and receptive to new ideas. As Morris Rafael Cohen observed:

> as a son of immigrant parents I shared with my students their background, their interests, and their limitations. My students were, on the whole, relatively emancipated in social matters and politics as well as in religion. They did not share the Orthodoxy of their parents. And breaking away from it left them ready and eager to adopt all sorts of substitutes. Though many of their parents were highly learned, as was not uncommon among Russian Jews, my students had gone to American public schools, and the learning of their parents, being permeated so deeply with the Talmudic tradition, was in the main foreign to them.[118]

The differential experiences of parents and children, the differences in depth of attachment to the old world and its ways, growing differences in language, and differences in education, could not help but yield a growing sense of alienation between generations. "I cannot think of mother except as of one who always stood between us and some unhappiness, or father," said Elizabeth Stern. "It was she who made it her task to explain us to father, to soften him to our desires."[119] Or in the words of Mary Antin:

> This sad process of disintegration of home life may be observed in almost any immigrant family of our class and with our traditions and aspirations. It is part of the process of Americanization; an upheaval preceding the state of repose. It is the cross that the first and second generations must bear, an involuntary sacrifice for the sake of the future generations.[120]

The schools themselves, as Superintendent Maxwell well under-

stood, exacerbated the gap between parent and child:

> What are we doing to increase the respect of the American child for the American parent? Many a time and often I have seen at school exercises in the foreign quarters of New York the children sitting in the front seats, well drest /sic/ in American clothes alert, self-assured; and in the back seats or standing along the walls, the parents, shabbily dressed in foreign-looking garments, patient, retiring, overawed. The speeches, optimistic always, vain. Glorious too often, are intended to spur the children on to effort; if a word is thrown to the fathers and mothers, it is only to admonish them to do their duty by their children. Them! Those fathers and mothers who have denied themselves food and clothes that their off-spring might have that mysterious thing called education, which will make their children American.[121]

The split between parent and child, perhaps unavoidable given the enormous gap between their respective natal worlds, deprived the second generation of the "cultural continuity" possessed by members of a settled culture and drove them into Teggart's world of "released" individuals freed from traditional strictures. Ludwig Lewison, immigrant German-Jewish author and literary critic, saw the debilitating consequences of this release:

> If you drain a man of spiritual and intellectual content, if you cut him off from the cultural continuity that is native to him and then fling him into a world where his choice lies between an impossible religiosity and Prohibition on the one hand, and the naked vulgarity of the streets and of the baseball diamond on the other, you have robbed him of the foundation on which character can be built. The slow gains of the ages are obliterated in him. He uses the mechanics of civilization to become a sharper or a wastrel.[122]

And in the words of Morris Rafael Cohen,

> the idea that all immigrants should wipe out their past and become simple imitations of the dominant type is neither possible nor desirable. We cannot wipe out the past. And we make ourselves ridiculous in the effort to do so.[123]

Not all immigrants or children of immigrants sought to cut themselves off from the past and its ways, nor was the degree of separation the same for all who sought to integrate themselves into the ways of the new world. But many were irremediably influenced by America -- often through their education. Such immigrants, released from their old world ties, freed, as Teggart and Park argued, from conventional modes of thought, and aggressive and self-assertive in their dealings with the world, had to seek a "new social order" and insinuate themselves into it. For some, it was the life of the street which gave meaning and direction to their "liberated" lives. In Michael Gold's thinly veiled autobiographical novel, Jews Without Money,[124] the children of immigrants are exposed and shaped by the power of the streets, a power which easily overrides the lesson of the classroom. For Gold, a life-long polemicist of the left, the existential reality of the streets was the most effective teacher, and one that had made him sensitive to the arguments of dialectical materialism, to him the conditions of poverty and repressiveness spoke for themselves and pointed to what he saw as its socialist resolution.

Henry Roth's Call it Sleep,[125] perhaps the most sensitive and insightful work ever written on the development of a child of immigrants, again speaks to the power of street and peers. School is portrayed as a shadow that hovers in the background of David's life, not a true source of knowledge and self-revelation. In the

foreground are the contrapuntal focal points of his young life--home and the life of the streets with his friends. David ultimately discovers himself in the interplay of the freedom and dangers of the street and the safety and anxiety of the home.

The street became the great escape, freedom, the eternal present, a present without the dead weight of the past.

> With their hearts and minds they were with the other boys building a bonfire on the street as they did every other night. They displayed unuttered resentment towards their father for forcing upon them his old-world customs.... They waited impatiently for that happy moment when father would doze off. They would then steal quickly out upon the street before the bonfire had died out.[126]

Not all "released" immigrants sought their new world in the life of the streets. Some saw a new world open before them through books. Learning English and discovering the world of literature is a common theme in immigrant writings. One of the most frequented institutions founded to serve the Lower East Side was the famed Aguilar Library, housed for many years in the Educational Alliance building. Rose Cohen, as a young girl, found her way to that library.

> I felt greatly awed when I looked around from my place in the line of the librarians' desk and saw the shelves and shelves of books and the stream of people hastening in and out with books under their arms. Nevertheless I held my head high. Couldn't I read now? And if I could read the whole world of knowledge was open to me. So I imagined.[127]

The immigrant-authors read many books, but one deserves special memtion because of its "Americanizing" influence, Louisa May Alcott's Little Women.

> I sat in the dim light of the rag shop and read the browned pages of that ragged copy of "Little Women."
>
> Since then I have read profound and beautiful books which have inspired and stirred me. But no book I have opened has meant as much to me as did that small volume telling in simple words such as I myself spoke, the story of an American childhood in New England.[128]

And in response to a request for assistance in finding a book "like for a child," the librarian at the Aguilar Library gave Rose Cohen Little Women.[129]

Much of the effort to arrive at a new synthesis, a new understanding, emerged out of the endless intellectual debates among immigrants themselves. Drawing upon learning acquired at school, in the streets, at work, from books and from remembrances of things not quite past,

> the immigrant to the New World broke the old patterns. The old limitations on the proper subjects of intellectual inquiry and discussion were removed, but the intellectual passion, the tradition of study, the high value which the family circle put upon learning and skill continued. Parents continued to grind their own lives to the bone in order to make it possible for their children to achieve some intellectual distinction or skill that might be considered a New World substitute for the Talmudic learning which represented the highest achievement in the old environment.[130]

Some immigrant intellectuals, including Morris Cohen, ultimately were converted to the belief in "salvation by education." He and his closest friends became followers of the English philosopher and social reformer, Thomas Davidson. Cohen, himself, became the director and moving force behind the "Breadwinners College," an effort initiated by Davidson to bring the light of education to the working people. Davidson presented his views of education as

a "Movement," a belief to be propogated. His ideas of education, as both liberating and enlightening, and accessible to everyone, were consonant with the deepest felt yearnings of many Lower East Side intellectuals. They too desired to break with the past, to redeem the world through a new "secular messianic" vision and longed to find acceptance in this new enlightened "society."[131] The Breadwinners College, the instrumentality designed to bring education to the working masses, closed its doors in 1917 after 17 years of operation. Its work, however, had been effectively taken over and "institutionalized" within the educational mainstream as the evening division of City College.

In order for the immigrant Jews to enter society-at-large, they needed more than objective knowledge of that world. They needed to arrive at an understanding that the world was not divided into hostile camps of Jew versus Gentile, as indeed had been the case for most immigrants in Europe.

> I was afraid of the cross. Everybody was, in Polotzk--all the Jews, I mean. For it was the cross that made the priests, and the priests made our troubles, as even the Christians admitted.... They put up crosses everywhere, and wore them on their necks, on purpose to remind themselves of these false things /accusing the Jews of deicide/; and they considered it pious to hate and abuse us, insisting that we had killed their God. To worship the cross and to torment a Jew was the same thing to them.[132]

And these legitimate fears on the part of the Jews gave rise to a set of internal defenses;

> As I look back to-day I see, within the wall raised around my birthplace by the vigilance of the police, another wall, higher, thicker, more impenetrable.... This wall within the

> wall is the religious integrity of the Jews, a fortress erected by the prisoners of the Pale, in defiance of their jailers; a stronghold built of the ruins of their pillaged homes, cemented with the blood of their murdered children.[133]

In the new world, however, prejudices and persecution were not officially sanctioned although at times they were conveniently overlooked. There was no established church seeking to impose its beliefs upon all members of the population, using the official power of the state.

To adapt to this new reality, to overcome latent prejudices in the nation and to fully realize potential opportunities, the Jews had to tear down their inner walls in order to discover the absence of impermeable outer walls. Morris Cohen came to such an understanding, as we saw above. And so, ultimately and enthusiastically, did Mary Antin.

For Mary Antin and Rose Cohen, Elizabeth Stern, Marcus Ravage, Henry Roth's David and countless others, it was the public school where the gentile world was first encountered and personalized in the form of a teacher or a fellow student.[134] Not all school experiences could have been positive, but school and the gentile world it represented was experienced as relatively benign and not a place of random violence and persecution aimed at controlling a class of people. Often school was viewed as a benevolent institution, a window in the joys of being an American.[135] But even for those who were tormented by and feared the school, it still

represented a unique means to salvation. It was anxiety about not succeeding and not fear of the gentile, however, that incited anxiety about school.

> I was awed by this system, I believed in it, I respected its force. The alternative was "going bad." The school was notoriously the toughest in our tough neighborhood, and the dangers of "going bad" were constantly impressed upon me at home and in school in dark whispers of the "reform school" and in examples of boys who had been picked up for petty thievery, rape, or flinging a heavy inkwell straight into a teacher's face. Behind any failure in school yawned the great abyss of a criminal career. Every refractory attitude doomed you with the sound "Sing Sing." Anything less than absolute perfection in school always suggested to my mind that I might fall out of the daily race, be kept back in the working class forever, or--dared I think of it?--fall into the criminal class itself.[136]

Ornitz captured the full range of "worlds" competing for the minds and souls of the ghetto young, worlds in conflict with one another.

> We boys lived several kinds of lives, traveling from planet to planet. First there was the queer relationship of American street gamins to our old-world parents. Indeed, an ocean separated us. And distance does not encourage confidings and communings, but creates misunderstanding and leads to contempt and intolerance. Many of us were transient, impatient aliens in our parents' homes. Then there was that strict, rarefied public school world. The manners and clothes, speech and point of view of our teachers extorted our respect and reflected upon the shabbiness, foreignness and crudities of our folks and homes. Again, there was the harsh and cruel cheder life with its atmosphere of superstition, dread and punishment. And then came our street existence, our sweet, lawless, personal, high-colored life, our vent to the disciplines, crampings and confinements of our other worlds.[137]

When school and home, street life and the larger culture, religion and popular culture are compatible and consistent one with the other,

the task of parents in directing, instructing and shaping the lives of their children is relatively easy. The integrated community carries the weak and directionless family along with the conventional tide. But in turn-of-the-century New York, the various sectors were often at war with one another in the ghetto, permitting the young to break free if they so desired. Those who exercised their option were "released" from traditional folkways and could follow the life of the streets, or the life of the school, behavioral license or intellectual liberation (although for many this turned into a newly elected set of conventions). As Kazin understood, the choice one made made all the difference. It is no wonder that immigrant Jewish parents, though often unsure of what the schools were teaching or how they were shaping and perhaps estranging their children, pressed for the life of the school. Could "compulsory, universal, free, secular and public" education have asked for better allies? No wonder that going to America became synonymous with going to school for so very many Jewish immigrants and their children.

VII. Conclusions

The presence of nearly all the Jewish immigrant youth in the public schools of New York City enabled the Board of Education to achieve a near monopoly in the field of elementary and secondary education. Although initially a low income student population, the public schools began to approximate "common schools" as im-

migrants and their children continued to send their offspring to the City's schools as they continued to rise up the economic ladder. The children of the upper class protestants, however, with a tradition of private school attendance, were rarely attracted to the City's schools, in part out of consideration for social and class difference, but more importantly because of the evolving definition of the public school. Rather than being an institution for transmitting and sustaining the values and beliefs of an established community, the public schools increasingly took on the task of social transformation, of Americanizing the alien poor. While an inappropriate and unnecessary objective for children of white anglo-saxon protestants (and earlier "ethnic" immigrants who had identified with and become largely assimilated within that culture), it was viewed as necessary and appropriate to the children flocking into the schools.

To function as agents of social transformation, the institution of the school was forced to broaden its scope and become more practical in its orientation. It was increasingly forced to become aware of and responsive to the whole child. Reading, writing and arithmetic by themselves scarcely sufficed for non-English speaking, undernourished, bewildered children of the ghetto.

Vastly increased numbers and broadening of funtions led to an increasingly elaborated bureaucratic structure, with increased specialization and growing demands for improved "efficiency" and "economy."[138] And as the schools grew and began to recruit its

teachers and administrators from among the ranks of its immigrant graduates, the worlds of the immigrants, their conflicts and points of view, became integral parts of and subtly changed the culture of the educational system itself.[139]

The presence of so many students and potential students of the Jewish faith also served to reinforce and accelerate the trend toward increased secularization of education in New York City. This, in turn, influenced the public perception of schooling and the kinds of functions it could legitimately discharge. The issue of church-state relations as they meet in the public school, was never fully resolved at that time and it still eludes us today.

At the outset of this paper we saw that the overriding task of Superintendent Maxwell and the New York City schools was to initiate the process of assimilating the children of immigrants into American life. How well was this goal achieved?

As Jews and other immigrant groups began to move beyond their physical ghettos and mix with one another and with more settled groups in the population in their new towns or neighborhoods, it was the public schools which had prepared them, especially the young, to move beyond their psychological ghettos. Certain basic conceptions of American culture, learned from teacher models and the school's institutional culture, coupled with a common language and national myth, provided the building blocks out of which a common twentieth century public culture could be constructed. It would not be the "high" American culture, the demise of which Henry James lamented

following his traumatic visit to the Lower East Side,[140] nor the culture of America's age of Confidence, the 1890's, captured so well by Henry Sidel Canby.[141]

It was to be a public culture that could accept the new immigrants and their altered, "Americanized," ways, though not necessarily American ways. It was a culture that could tolerate a variety of private cultures reflecting ethnic and religious preferences. It was a culture that still encouraged, and at times enforced, public conformity, but it was generally tolerant of private diversity. By 1914, the schools in New York City were fairly accurate reflections of this cultural dualism.

The individual Jew, by 1914, had a degree of freedom unknown in Eastern Europe. To some that freedom was considered a disaster in that it permitted the breakup of a coherent value-laden community. To others this liberty was seized upon as a blessed opportunity to reconstruct Jewish religious traditions so that Jews could participate, as Jews, in an enlightened modern world, and would be able to enjoy the freedom and dignity previously denied them in their lands of origin.

Individuals went their private ways; some walked away from all ties to the traditional community and sought to become what Lewison described as "merely another dweller on an endless Main Street;"[142] others sought identification with the secular movements of their day; another group of individuals reaffirmed traditional

lifeways; and some sought to achieve a new synthesis -- the secular world of the schools and the spiritual world of their people's past.

Footnotes

1. Turgot, 18th century French historian, speaking of human migrations, quoted in Frederick J. Teggart. Theory of History. New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1925, p. 183.

2. Figures based on data contained in the following sources; Morris C. Horowitz and Lawrence J. Kaplan. The Jewish Population of the New York Area, 1900-1975. /Demographic study Committee./ N.Y.: Federation of Jewish Philanthropies, 1959; Samuel Joseph. Jewish Immigration to the United States: From 1881 to 1910. Studies in History, Economics & Political Law, Faculty of Political Science of Columbia Univ., Vol LIX, No. 4. New York: Columbia Univ., 1914; Kehillah (Jewish Community) of New York City. The Jewish Communal Register of New York City, 1917-1918. Second Ed. New York: Kehillah of New York City, 1918; and H.S. Linfield. "Statistics of Jews and Jewish Organizations in the United States: An Historical Review of Ten Censuses, 1850-1937." American Jewish Year Book, 5699 (1938-1939), Vol 40. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America: 1938, pp. 61-84.

3. Horowitz and Kaplan, p.3; see also Niles Carpenter. Immigrants and Their Children, 1920. U.S. Bureau of the Census, Census Monographs, VII. Washington: U.S. Gov't. Printing Office, 1927.

4. Selma Cantor Berrol. Immigrants at School, New York City, 1898-1914. N.Y.: Arno Press, 1978, pp. tables following 142; Samuel P. Abelow. Dr. William H. Maxwell. Brooklyn: Scheba Pub. Co, 1934, p. 156.

5. New York (State). University. Proceedings of the Dedication of the New York State Education Building. Albany, Oct. 15, 16, 17, 1912. Nineth Annual Report, Supplemental Volume. Albany, N.Y.: New York State Education Department, 1913, p. 59.

6. William H. Maxwell. "The Development of Elementary Schools in the State of New York," in Ibid., pp. 59-72.

7. Ibid., p.61.

8. Abelow, p. 141.

9. Based on estimates of the elementary aged children (6-14) in the Jewish population and attendance at public schools on the part of these children. Estimates made by the Bureau of Jewish Education, Kehillah of New York City, in Communal Register, 1917-1918. pp. 349-359.

10. Simon Dubnow. History of the Jews in Poland and Russia. 3 Vols. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1916, Vol. II, pp. 243-258, 280.

11. Ibid., pp. 309, 312, 373.

12. Ibid., p. 373.

13. Ibid., pp. 327f.

14. A similar argument is advanced by Joseph, Jewish Immigration to the United States, p. 155. See also Charles S. Bernheimer, Ed. The Russian Jew in the United States. Philadelphia: The J.C. Winston Co., 1905; Dubnow, op. cit., pp. 327f.; and Edmund J. James. Ed. The Immigrant Jew in America. New York: Buck & Co., 1907.

15. Joseph, Jewish Immigration, p. 156.

16. Samuel Joseph. History of the Baron de Hirsch Fund: The Americanization of the Jewish Immigrant. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1935, p. vii.

17. Yekhiel Shtern. "A Kheyder in Tyszowce (Tishevits)." YIVO Annual of Jewish Social Science, Vol. 5 (1950), pp. 152-171, p.159.

18. See Shtern for a full description of a traditional cheder, including a physical description of the "school," the course of study, methods of instruction and social atmosphere.

19. Shtern, and I.J. Singer. The Brothers Ashkenazi. New Translation by Joseph Singer, intro. by Irving Howe. Original Yiddish edition, 1937. N.Y.: Bantam Books, 1981. The novel contains extended scenes depicting "cheder" life.

20. "Education." The Jewish Encyclopedia. N.Y. & London: Funk & Wagnalls Co., 1903-1905. The entry on Jewish education was prepared by Dr. M. Güdemann, Chief Rabbi, Vienna, Austria.

21. Eliakum Zunser. A Jewish Bard: Being the Biography of Eliakum Zunser. Written by himself and rendered into English by Simon Hirsdansky. Edited by A. H. Fromenson. Intro. by Morris Rosenfeld. N.Y.: Zunser Jubilee Committee, March, 1905, p.9.

22. Ibid., p.22.

23. Ibid., p. 28.

24. Dubnow, Vol. II, p. 209.

25. Zunser, p. 30.

26. Dubnow, Vol. II, pp. 210f.

27. Ibid., pp. 324f.

28. For a first hand account of this group and the roles it played in the emerging Jewish-American community see Abraham Cahan. The Education of Abraham Cahan. Phil.: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1969. This autobiography is by one of this group's most influential members, a long-time socialist, editor of the Jewish daily, the Forward, and highly acclaimed novelist. See also his novel, The Rise of David Levinsky. Original date of publication, 1917. N.Y.: Harper Torchbooks, 1960.

29. For the influential role of the Yiddish language press as an agent of secularization, assimilation and general education, see Robert E. Park. "Foreign Language Press and Social Progress." in Ralph H. Turner, ed. Robert E. Park on Social Control and Collective Behavior. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1967; Robert E. Park. The Immigrant Press and Its Control. Orig. pub. 1922. Montelcair, N.J.: Patterson Smith, 1971; and Mordecai Soltes. The Yiddish Press: An Americanizing Agency. Originally pub. 1925. N.Y.: Arno Press, 1969.

30. I.J. Singer's The Brothers Ashkenazi, set in the period of about 1840 to 1920, details the rise of industrialism in its most repressive forms, secularization and proletarianization of the Jews of Lodz. It brings to life a critical era in Jewish and East European history.

31. Isaac A. Hourwich. Immigration and Labor: The Economic Aspects of European Immigration to the United States. N.Y.: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1912; Arcadius Kahan, "Urbanization in Central Europe: Patterns and Problems," a paper presented at the Conference on "The Legacy of Jewish Migration: 1881 and its Impact," March 8, 1981; I.M. Rubinow. "Economic Condition of the Jews in Russia." U.S. Bureau of Labor, Bulletin, No. 72, Sept., 1907, pp. 487-583.

32. Joseph, Jewish Immigration, pp. 192f.

33. For the most comprehensive account of the Jewish settlement of the Lower East Side, see Moses Rischin. The Promised City: New York's Jews, 1870-1914. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1962.

34. For a history of the rise and decline of "Jewish" Brownsville, see Alter F. Landesman. Brownsville: the Birth, Development and Passing of a Jewish Community in New York. Second Ed. New York: Bloch Pub. Co., 1969.

35. Oscar Handlin. The Uprooted. New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1951.

36. I wish to express my thanks to Mr. Hillel Kempinski, Director of the Jewish Labor Bund Archives, for sharing with me his insights into the early settlement of East European Jews in New York, especially the early lack of structure and cohesion.

37. Arthur A. Goren. New York Jews and the Quest for Community: the Kehillah Experiment, 1908-1922. N.Y.: Columbia Univ. Press & Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1970, especially, chaps. 2,3 & 4.

38. Jewish Communal Register, pp. 349-353.

39. Rudolph Glanz. "The History of the Jewish Community in New York." YIVO Annual of Jewish Social Science, Vol. IV, 1949, pp. 34-50, p.34.

40. Ibid., p. 35.

41. Teggart, p. 183.

42. Robert E. Park. "Migration and the Marginal Man," in Ralph E. Turner, ed. Robert E. Park on Social Control and Collective Behavior. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1967, pp. 194-206, p. 195.

43. Teggart, p. 194.

44. Ibid., p. 194. Underlining in the original.

45. Park, "Migration and the Marginal Man," p. 200.

46. Ibid., p. 200.

47. Teggart, p. 196.

48. Czeslaw Milosz. Native Realm: a Search for Self-Definition. Translated from the Polish by Catherine S. Leach. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1968, p. 67.

49. Park, "Migration and the Marginal Man," p. 201.

50. For a complete and enlightening account of indigenous Americans' responses to the challenge of foreign migrants and "foreign" influences in general, see John Higham. Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism 1860-1925. Second Edition. N.Y.: Atheneum, 1973.

51. Park, "Migration and the Marginal Man," p. 205.

52. Ibid., p. 205.

53. Rudolph Glanz. "Jewish Social Conditions as Seen by the Muckrakers," YIVO Annual of Jewish Social Sciences, Vol. IX. 1954, pp. 308-331, p. 328.

54. Rev. J.A. Burns, The Growth and Development of the Catholic School System in the United States. N.Y.: Benziger Bros., 1912.

55. The Machzike Talmud Torah was established in the mid 1880's. See Jeremiah J. Berman. "Jewish Education in New York City, 1860-1900." YIVO Annual of Jewish Social Sciences, Vol. IX, 1954, pp. 247-275, pp. 272f.

56. A Jewish day school movement later emerged, but never appealed to a broad segment of the Jewish community. See Jeremiah J. Berman, "The Return to the Jewish Day School." Conservative Judaism, Jan., 1951.

57. It is interesting to compare the Lower East Side Jews with the Irish Catholic community in their respective responses to American public education. A critical difference in the 1880's was that the Irish were already well established in the U.S. and could find the resources to support an educational system geared directly to their needs, interests and beliefs. And unlike the then poorly organized Jewish community, the Catholic Church, with its hierarchical structure, was better able administratively and politically to mobilize the entire Irish Catholic community and its available resources.

58. Ronald Sanders. The Downtown Jews. N.Y.: Harper & Row, 1969; and Rischin, The Promised City.

59. Edward Digby Baltzell. The Protestant Establishment: Aristocracy & Caste in America. N.Y.: Vintage Bks., 1966, chapts. 3 & 5; Higham, Strangers in the Land, chapt. 3.

60. A census of such schools, conducted in 1893 by the Baron de Hirsch Fund, suggests that perhaps as many as 250 chedarim were in existence at that time. See Lloyd Gartner. "The Jews

of New York's East Side, 1980-1893." American Jewish Historical Quarterly,March, 1964, pp. 264-275.

61. There was also an old, well established Sephardic Jewish community dating back to the 17th and 18th centuries. For early Jewish settlement in the U.S. up to 1860, see Hyman B. Grinstein. The Rise of the Jewish Community of New York, 1654-1860. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1945.

62. Jewish Women's Congress. Papers of the Jewish Women's Congress; held at Chicago, September 4,5,6 and 7, 1893. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1894.

63. Lawrence A. Cremin. The Transformation of the School: Progressivism in American Education, 1876-1957. N.Y.: Vintage Bks., 1964, pp. 58-89.

64. Rebekah Kohut, "Discussion of paper presented by Minnie D. Louis," in Jewish Women's Congress, Papers, pp. 187-195, p. 190.

65. Goldie Bamber. "Woman's Place in Charitable Work--What it Is and What it Should Be," in Jewish Women's Congress, Papers, pp. 157-162, p. 161.

66. Ibid., pp. 158, 159.

67. Minnie D. Louis. "Mission-Work Among the Unenlightened Jews." in Jewish Women's Congress, Papers, pp. 170-186, p. 179.

68. The Industrial Removal Office of the Baron de Hirsch Fund resettled nearly 80,000 Jews throughout the U.S. and Canada between 1900 and 1917 and provided assistance to thousands of Jewish farmers between 1900 and 1933 so that they could settle on the land and not be forced into the cities. See Joseph, History of the Baron de Hirsch Fund, esp. pp. 288, 289.

69. Louis, "Mission-Work," p. 176.

70. Lillian D. Wald. The House on Henry Street. Original pub. 1915. N.Y.: Dover, 1971.

71. Julia Richman. "Women Wage-Workers: with Reference to Directing Immigrants," in Jewish Women's Congress, Papers, pp. 91- 107, p. 106.

72. Hebrew Free School Association of the City of New York. "Sixth Annual Report of the President of the Hebrew Free School Association of the City of New York. N.Y.: Hebrew Orphan Asylum Printing Establishment, 1874, p.3.

73. Berman, "Jewish Education," p. 257.

74. Ibid., 259.

75. The Jewish Messenger, Feb. 7, 1879, cited in Ibid., p. 260.

76. Ibid., p. 269.

77. Cremin, p. 64.

78. For members of the Board of Trustees at the time of its founding in 1890, see Joseph, History of the Baron de Hirsch Fund, p. 19.

79. Ibid., p. synopsis.

80. Ibid., pp. 279-280; Dubnow, Vol. II, 206-223.

81. Joseph, Baron de Hirsch, pp. 258-265.

82. Berrol, Immigrants at School, pp. 217-219.

83. Joseph, Baron de Hirsch, p. 263.

84. Ibid, p. 264.

85. Berman, "Jewish Education," p. 262.

86. Ibid., 260.

87. Grinstein,pp. 238-243; Berman, "Jewish Education," p. 247.

88. New York (City) Board of Education. "Report of the Select Committee of the Board of Education, to which was referred a communication from the Trustees of the Fourth Ward, in relation to the Sectarian character of certain Books in Use in the Schools of that Ward," New York: Printed by Levi D. Slamm, 1843; Grinstein, p. 244.

89. Samuel Windson Brown. The Secularization of American Education; as shown by State Legislation, State Constitutional Provisions and State Supreme Court Decisions. Original edition, 1912. N.Y.: Russell & Russell, 1967, p. 63.

90. Grinstein, pp. 244f.

91. Ibid., 245.

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93. David B. Tyack. "Ways of Seeing: An Essay on the History of Compulsory School," Harvard Educational Review, Vol. 46, No. 3, Aug., 1976, pp. 355-389, p. 363.

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96. Berman, "Jewish Education," p. 272f.

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99. Henrietta Szold. "The Education of the Jewish Girl," The Maccabaean, Vol. 5, No. 1, pp. 5-10, p. 6. (July, 1903).

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115. Ibid., p. 123.

116. Ravage, p. 79.

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122. Ludwig Lewisohn. Up Stream: An American Chronicle. Original edition, 1921. N.Y.: Modern Library, 1926, pp. 288f.

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130. Morris R. Cohen, p. 94f.

131. Thomas Davidson. The Education of the Wage-Earners. Boston: Ginn & Co., 1904, pp. 21, 53.

132. Antin, pp. 6f.

133. Ibid., p. 29.

134. For many immigrants segregated housing patterns coupled with neighborhood schools yielded ethnically segregated schools. Teachers, however, were most often recruited from the dominant cultural group, including the Americanized children of earlier immigrants--which meant Irish and Germans at the turn of the century. See Berrol, pp. 50-53, for discussion of school segregation.

135. See, for example, the humerous stories of Myra Kekky, a former teacher on the Lower East Side, which deal with her former pupils; Little Citizens. New York, 1904; Wards of Liberty. New York, 1907.

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